



**Convention on the Elimination
of all Forms of Discrimination
Against Women**

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CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS SUBMITTED BY STATES PARTIES
UNDER ARTICLE 18 OF THE CONVENTION

Initial reports of States parties

SENEGAL

Pursuant to article 18 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the present report by Senegal describes the legislative, judicial, administrative and other measures adopted by that country for the purpose of implementing the provisions of the Convention, as well as the advances that have been achieved in this area, since 7 March 1985, the date of the Convention's entry into force in Senegal.

The report consists of two parts:

I. GENERAL ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND POLITICAL CONTEXT WITH RESPECT TO THE APPLICATION OF THE CONVENTION ON THE ELIMINATION OF ALL FORMS OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN

1.1 In the economic arena

Our country, during the last decade, has been faced with the consequences of the international economic crisis.

This crisis has been reflected in a deterioration of our national economy, brought about, inter alia, by a rise in the dollar that has added to our petroleum outlays and further increased our national debt.

Both the economic and financial recovery plan and the accompanying measures of structural readjustment that have been adopted in order to respond to this situation have been diminished in their effectiveness as the result of the consequences of more than a decade of drought.

Nevertheless, the national rallying of our people in the face of these many challenges has made it possible to achieve significant results and create a climate of internal and external solidarity towards our country.

1.2 In the social and cultural arenas

Well before the adoption by the United Nations of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, Senegal had undertaken commendable efforts to involve women more thoroughly in the process of the economic and social development of the nation.

At the level, for example, of Government policy, consideration of women's specific requirements has been reflected in their social advancement, notably through access to positions of responsibility in community organizations (rural and municipal councils), State institutions (e.g., as members of the Government and village heads) and public and private organizations (as Chief Executive Officers).

In a parallel effort, the improvement of working and living conditions for women has been pursued, in particular, through the initiation of development projects supported by the kind of training that is aimed at enabling women to perform independently responsible functions.

In addition to these many measures at the national level, Senegal has contributed, within Africa and internationally, to advancing the cause of women's integration.

For example, our country recently hosted an international seminar on traditional practices, which led to the establishment of an Inter-African Committee with headquarters in Dakar. And it is this same context that provides the background for Senegal's broadly based campaigns of information and solidarity towards the people of southern Africa and, above all, the women of that region.

1.3 In the political arena

Senegal has reaffirmed its determination to involve its women in the democratic process that has been under way since 1981. Since that time, in fact, the women of our country have been playing an increasingly important role within the nation's various political groups.

Within this framework and relying on the support of their special organizations, women have succeeded in imparting a fresh impulse to party life as they involve themselves in increasing numbers in the decision-making process.

II. MEASURES AND EFFECTS OF A LEGISLATIVE, ADMINISTRATIVE, ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL NATURE RESULTING FROM THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CONVENTION ON THE ELIMINATION OF ALL FORMS OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN

2.1 Legislative measures

The ratification of the Convention brought with it a greater awareness and more powerful motivation to press forward towards equality of rights and duties for women.

The application of the Convention has profited, in Senegal, from the existence of earlier regulatory provisions. Among these, the following in particular may be mentioned:

- The Senegalese Constitution, which guarantees women rights equal to those of men.
 - The General Statutes of the Civil Service, which, in article 9, forbid any discrimination on the basis of sex.
 - Law No. 61-34 of 15 June 1961, containing a revision of the Labour Code, also lays down the principle of non-discrimination and guarantees equality of remuneration for work of equal value.
- This law also protects women in their role as mothers and provides for the payment of full wages during the maternity leave period (14 weeks).
- Law No. 72-25 on the rural communities, and Decree No. 72-1288, which extends to women agricultural workers the same status as men.
 - The National Education Guidance Act, which provides for equality in education and training for all citizens.
 - Law No. 72-61 of 12 June 1972, which is concerned with the Family Code, confers on women genuine legal status. In addition to ensuring the rights of children, the Code also guarantees those of wives, particularly with respect to divorce, succession and the education, raising and protection of their offspring.

Since 1985, the country's various institutions and in particular the Ministry of Social Development have been helping to ensure the more effective application of these laws, the principles of all of which are implicitly contained in the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

It is against this background that the aforementioned Inter-African Committee set up to inquire into traditional practices with injurious effects on the health of mothers and children was established.

The effective application of these legislative measures and indeed of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women continues to encounter a number of obstacles.

First of all, particular mention must be made of the lack of relevant information. Despite the efforts undertaken by the Ministry of Social Development, specifically through the national fortnightly events on behalf of Senegalese women and the work of its decentralized agencies, the women of Senegal remain handicapped in the exercise of their rights because of a variety of factors:

- Illiteracy,
- Social hardship,
- The absence of co-ordination between the many women's organizations.

In the second place, the provisions of certain laws designed to improve their status will have to be revised in order to take better account of women's recognized legal capacity (for example, as parents).

2.2 Political and administrative measures

With regard to political activities, there is de jure equality of the sexes. Women enjoy the right to vote and may be elected to national, regional and local political organs. In the National Assembly, participation by women has evolved as follows during the last two legislative periods:

1978 8 women deputies out of 100 or 8 per cent

1983 13 women deputies out of 120 or 11 per cent.

At the community level, women are performing the functions of municipal councillors, and since 1984 two women have presided over the municipal councils of their cities.

In the rural councils, the deliberating organs of the rural communities, women account for a little more than 20 per cent of the members.

Three rural councils of the 584 that exist are presided over by women.

These efforts to bring about the integration of women and to introduce them to positions of greater responsibility have been even more marked at the governmental level, where out of a total of 25 members there are three women ministers heading the following departments:

- Social Development,
- Public Health,
- Emigré Affairs.

Within the political parties women are active both at the grass roots level and in the policy-making bodies.

2.3 Economic measures

Beyond the National Plan of Action for Women, which is a kind of compendium of development projects and programmes on their behalf, the Government, the international, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations and the women's associations are actively contributing towards the more genuine advancement of Senegalese women.

Women are involved in nearly all sectors of the economy either as wage-earners or as enterprise heads.

2.3.1 Rural development

Women represent 70 per cent of the rural population and are quite active in the agricultural, stock-raising and fisheries sectors, where they play a major role in the processing, packaging and sale of production.

By stressing the need to organize rural women into women's promotional groups engaged in the implementation of development projects, the Government is endeavouring to make better use of the country's human resources and to bring about a substantial improvement in the living conditions of the population.

For example, a number of projects have been designed to alleviate the domestic work of women and enable them to engage in remunerated activities.

Since 1970, the programme for lightening the work of women has established:

- 579 millet mills,
- 76 millet hullers,
- 64 rice huskers,
- 22 palm nut crushers,
- 14 oil pressers.

In addition, 12 agricultural projects specifically designed for women and affecting 1,000 of them have been or are being implemented for a total of 41 million CFA francs.

As for the fisheries sector, promotional efforts here are almost exclusively in the hands of women, who are involved in the processing, packaging and distribution stages.

Nevertheless, a number of obstacles continue to persist to the realization by women of their potential opportunities in these sectors. While it is true that their status as workers, in the enterprises engaged in the processing and packaging of agricultural and fishery products, has been legally regulated, further steps must be taken in order to secure fully the application of the principles of equality and equity. The same is true with regard to working conditions (safety, laboriousness, etc.).

2.3.2 Employment

The Senegalese State, having realized the need to promote the advancement of women in the employment sector, has, in addition to working through the already existing structures (the Civil Service Ministry and its offices), instructed the Ministry of Social Development, through the Division of Female Labour:

- To work for the elimination of de facto and de jure discrimination against women,
- To study the problems of female employment and their effect on the status of women,
- To consider measures designed to protect working women and to monitor compliance with the relevant regulations.

The following tables shed some light on the situation of women in this sector.

Table 1

Participation of women according to employment categories
(in percentage)

Employment categories	Percentage of women
Employers	0.1
Independent workers	12.3
Domestic help	15.1
Wage-earners	2.6
Others	13.0
Total	43.1

Source: National Bureau of Census - Ministry of Economic Affairs and Finance.

While for all employment categories as a whole women account for 43 per cent of the work-force, it is none the less true that women workers still continue to be confined to certain sectors that have traditionally been reserved for them.

Table 2

Participation of women according to branch of activity
(in percentage)

Branch of activity	Percentage of women in the branch
Agriculture, stock-raising, fisheries	33.2
Extraction industries	13.04
Manufacturing industries	1.0
Electricity, water, gas	0.13
Commerce and the hotel trade	5.0
Transport	6.0
Financial establishments	0.4
Administration	0.5
Public works	0.04

Source: National Bureau of Census - Ministry of Economic Affairs and Finance.

This table supplements table 1 and indicates the principal sectors in which women are most numerous.

Table 3

Participation of women according to occupational category
(in percentage)

Occupational category	Percentage of women in the category
Scientific professions	0.5
Administrative personnel	0.5
Commercial personnel	5.6
Agricultural workers	33.2
Skilled and unskilled industrial workers	11.0
Service sector employees	2.2

Source: National Bureau of Census - Ministry of Economic Affairs and Finance.

The principal reason for these low indicators does not lie in any discrimination against women with respect to employment, but can be far better explained by their generalized lack of training and professional qualifications.

For the future advancement of Senegalese women, it will be necessary to give particular attention to these factors, particularly through the more effective implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

2.3.3 Education

Considerable efforts have been made in this area by the Government of Senegal on behalf of women, efforts that have made it possible to reach out to the country's rural regions.

With a school attendance rate of 67.4 per cent in 1984-1985, there has also been an increase in the share of girls and women among the students enrolled at the various levels of education.

Enrolment	1977-1978		1983-1984	
	Total number	Percentage of girls	Total number	Percentage of girls
Levels of education				
Public and private elementary education	364 585	39.7	533 394	39.9
General and technical intermediate education, public and private	62 937	33.2	88 890	34.2
General and technical secondary education	16 600	24.0	25 359	28.3

2.3.4 Health

Senegal, like other countries, has put into effect a primary health care programme aimed at protecting the most vulnerable population groups, namely mothers and children.

This new programme is intended to reinforce the public health policy, one of the primary objectives of which has been to bring health care under community control.

In this connection, mention may be made of the development of basic health care facilities such as village maternity homes and pharmacies, the nutrition and health protection programme, and the mother and child care centres.

In addition, the Ministry of Social Development has started two major projects concerned with family welfare.

Conclusion

The ratification by Senegal of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women testifies to the nation's desire to further advance the status of its women.

This determination, which has existed for some time, has already been reflected in a great many practical accomplishments.

While it is true that there are today no longer any difficulties in taking account of the specific requirements of women and in involving them in the life of the nation, it is no less true that continued progress in the advancement of women requires further efforts. Given the country's economic situation, these efforts cannot unfortunately fully correspond to the Government's proclaimed political will in this area.

However, it is recognized today that it is not only the State and the governmental and non-governmental organizations that must contribute to this end, but that, by working within their own organizations, women themselves must also - and primarily - provide the driving force for their own advancement.